DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 066 690 CG 007 405

AUTHOR	Goldman, Leo
TITLE	Critical Concerns in Counselor Education.
PUB DATE	72
NOTE	9p.; Presented at the American Personnel and Guidance Association Convention, March 25-30, 1972, Chicago, Illinois
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS	Counseling; Counseling Effectiveness; Counseling Goals; Counseling Instructional Programs; *Counselor Educators; *Counselor Role; *Counselors; *Counselor Training; Guidance; *Professional Education; Pupil Personnel Workers

ABSTRACT

This paper was presented as part of a workshop titled "Preparation of Counselors for the 1970's" at the 1972 Convention of the American Personnel and Guidance Association in Chicago. Rather than a scholarly or technical analysis, the author used the opportunity to speak to several issues believed to be critical in the development of meaningful counselor education programs for the 1970's. It is a subjective personal statement and not necessarily influenced by the kinds of experiences and observations which the author has had. The paper is divided into the following subtopics: (1) Generalist or Specialist?, (2) The Storehouse Theory, (3) We Need Compulsives, (4) the Preservice-Inservice Division of Labor, (5) Manifold Roles: All OK, and (6) Full-time Study. In conclusion, the author emphasizes that he is not questioning or criticizing the present standards that exist, but rather asking whether we have failed to come to grips with some of the critical issues in the field. (Author/BW)

ED 066690

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

CRITICAL CONCERNS IN COUNSELOR EDUCATION

Leo Goldman

City University of New York

The topic assigned to me was "Curriculum Issues" in counselor preparation for the 1970's, and Chairman Stripling's mandate was that I try to be critical and creative on the topic. With the invitation to prepare a paper came copies of the three sets of standards--for the preparation of elementary, secondary, and higher education counselors, respectively,--and also a "Working Paper" prepared by Jannar Davis, a graduate student at the University of Florida, which attempted to combine the three sets of standards into one.

After studying all this material, I decided not to try to do a scholarly or technical analysis--not that this is unnecessary, but rather that I did not feel that I could add very much along those lines. Instead, I took advantage of the openness of the invitation and have used this paper as an opportunity to speak to several issues that I believe are critical in the development of meaningful counselor education programs for the 1970's. This is a subjective personal statement and it is necessarily influenced by the kinds of experiences and observations I have had--mainly in counselor education in a large urban university whose graduate students come to us after a day of teaching or counseling in crowded inner city schools.

A. Generalist or Specialist?

We have been back and forth on the question as to whether counselors (especially in schools) are primarily generalists or specialists. My impression is that most counselor education programs have resolved the issue by burying it. We give our students a smattering of competence in such functions as educational assessment, vocational assessment, career guidance, precollege guidance, one-to-one counseling, group counseling, program management and maybe a few others. Then we turn them loose to sink or swim, somehow implying, I think, that they are expected to be generalists, but that, since the chances are very good that nobody else in the school knows as much as they do about the various functions I mentioned, they are really going to be all the specialists too. The result, in all too many cases, is that they flounder, or they run around sticking a finger in a dike until somehow the leak stops for a while, or a bigger one appears, or they just give up in the face of an impossible situation and busy themselves with trivia.

---

*Prepared for presentation as part of a workshop titled "Preparation of Counselors for the 1970's" sponsored jointly by ASCA and ACES during the 1972 Convention of the American Personnel and Guidance Association in Chicago, Illinois.

CG 007 405

I find it difficult to criticize counselors for functioning in these ineffective ways. We have given them a huge task and terribly inadequate training to do it. And now we have been haranguing them for not being militant change agents at the same time--something we did not prepare them to be at all. Perhaps if counselors could go through a full doctoral program with lots of supervised experience, they might be able to function in all the roles at once. But that doesn't seem to be even a remote possibility, nor is it necessarily desirable.

For me, a couple of things seem likely: one is that most school counselors--at least in the 70's and maybe beyond that--will not be able to be both competent generalists and competent specialists. If we are to offer truly competent precollege guidance, career guidance, assessment, and other highly complex services, we will need to train some people as specialists. Furthermore, schools will need to let them specialize; larger schools could do this readily, and many smaller schools could share specialists. But why must we assume that all the specialists must exist within the school organization? Why couldn't school counselors proclaim that they simply aren't able, as general counselors, to provide all the special services? What would be wrong with contracting with other community agencies to provide these services--whether in the school building or outside? This kind of thing is already being done in cooperative programs between the state employment services and public schools and in various kinds of shared service arrangements.

But I go beyond my topic, which is curriculum. We need to think very seriously about our responsibility for preparing specialists in functional areas. In the college student personnel field the problem has been partly solved, because many are now trained in one of the specialties--residence work, financial work, placement, personal counseling, etc. However, the public schools for the most part have shunned specialization, and counselor educators have done little if anything to help correct the situation. At the least our public statements on counselor education should clearly specify the specialty areas that there might be, and the kinds of training and experience that are necessary to be, for example, a really first-class precollege counselor or career counselor or group counselor. Then we should try to find ways to offer specialist training to those who want it. Not every university can hope to offer training in all specialties, but we could share the load in a planned way so that each student could obtain the training he wants as close as possible to home.

Of course, not everyone agrees that specialists are needed. Those who do not, have the burden of proof; they must be able to demonstrate that the counselors they train are prepared to do the best job we know how to do in each of the areas in which they claim competence. Unless my observations and reading have been extremely biased, I don't think they can demonstrate anything like that.

We are ready for specialization within school guidance, and it is time that our published standards give full recognition to the implications of that readiness, and that we gear up to offer the necessary training.

B. The Storehouse Theory

Some people whom I respect greatly seem to disagree with me on the notion of the storehouse theory of learning. In fact, almost everybody seems to disagree with me, because most schools and colleges operate on the storehouse theory. Yet I think it is as wrong as can be.

I began to reach this conclusion some years ago when I had the experience of supervising students in a counseling practicum whom I had taught in some of their pre-practicum courses. I found what many colleagues have found--that, for example, when students who had studied tests and measurements for an entire year encountered practicum clients who obviously could have benefitted from tests the counselors acted as if they had never heard of a test, let alone knew how to choose one and use it helpfully. And it was difficult for me to blame the instructor of the measurement courses, especially in those cases where I had been the instructor.

And I have had similar experience with other counseling functions--occupational information in particular. Practicum students rarely thought of using occupational information, and even when they did, they seemed to have forgotten everything they had learned.

It seemed clear to me that the didactic courses in these and other areas had not been very productive--in fact, seemed later to have been largely a waste of time. I think this is because most of these courses operate on the storehouse assumption--that you can store up concepts and understandings and information and then retrieve them when needed later to solve practical problems. I don't think that it works very well for most people. Most people learn things best and retain them best, and can retrieve them best, when they learn them in a setting of application--that is, a practical, functional, applied manner.

This is why I am disturbed to see counselor educators still talking so much about "courses"--as if a course is a meaningful educational unit. Let me say it very plainly: I think that most "courses" in most schools are a waste of time--not complete waste, but maybe a 50% to 90% waste. If I had my way, I would teach nothing--certainly nothing in the way of professional education--in isolation from its practical applications. That is why I am also disturbed to see that counselor education standards say that laboratory and field experiences "might be" in the first "and/or" second year of a two year program. If I were designing a dream counselor education program, I would begin some kind of meaningful applied experiences in the first week of the first year--or the second week at the latest. And I wouldn't build up from baby experiences to grown-up experiences--from make-believe to real. I think

it's mostly a waste of precious time to do that--because one never learns the real skills until one is in a real situation. At least that is what I have seen with practicum student after practicum student. True, it sometimes helps to have a brief period of protected practice by way of role playing with fellow students or coached clients. But I think that there should be a minimum of that, because one doesn't really function as a counselor until one is counseling for real. That is the moment of truth; the sooner we get to it, the sooner we can see who we really are and can begin to change and grow.

I don't worry so much about protecting clients. After all, there is evidence that undergraduates and paraprofessionals, when properly selected, can provide real help to real people with their real needs. Our students certainly should be able to do the same with selected clients practically from the start--especially when we take into account the intensive supervision that is received in a good practicum.

C. We Need Compulsives

But there is another side to this coin. If we were to go to the extreme of building a counselor education program entirely around supervised experience in the laboratory and the field, there is a distinct risk that we would omit necessary information, theories, and other cognitive input. It is difficult to combine the openness and looseness of supervised real life experience with the controls that are needed if we are to be certain that our counselors-in-training read the books and the articles they should read, become acquainted with the theories and research findings they should know about, and acquire the information they should have at their fingertips.

My colleague at CUNY, Randy Tarrier, has helped me to understand better the problem and some of the solutions. He has been working on the development of skill modules during which, in careful planned sequences of a few weeks duration, students come into contact with the phenomenon under study--observing it on closed-circuit television, trying it out on coached clients, and then on real clients, while at the same time reading related materials and participating in discussion of related theory and research.

This is hard work for all concerned and terribly demanding of the instructors. It requires a lot of compulsiveness and a lot of energy, expenditure. I'm sure I do not have all the necessary qualities, and I would guess that very few individuals do. In staffing counselor education programs we need to think of these different temperamental needs--loose and compulsive, growth facilitating and information acquiring. We need somehow to form faculty teams to work together on these modules. It won't be easy and it will not always be comfortable, because these different kinds of temperament may clash, or at least not find it easy to work together. But we do need both, and we should be able to find ways to get both.

D. The Preservice-Inservice Division of Labor

Another manifestation of the storehouse fallacy is our assumption--at least in most universities--that formal education is best done in a neat package, over a period of one, two, or more years, at the end of which the graduating package is neatly wrapped and shipped out. Like the department store, we hope that the contents will be satisfactory to the consumer and that the package will not be returned for exchange or refund.

But now undergraduates have begun to reject the package plan. Some are postponing college for a year or more after high school graduation, so that they can do whatever they feel they need to do before being ready for further formal education. Some leave college after a year or two, again to do things that they feel they need to do at that point in their development, and return when they are ready. And increasingly students seem to be dividing their undergraduate college education between two or more colleges, because each has something different to offer them.

What does this have to do with counselor education? I think that we need to look at the good ideas--and the mistakes--of other fields, and allocate our resources in more effective ways. Why must we try to pack all of a counselor's professional education into one year--or even two years? Why not give him just the basics, or the specialty training, send him out, and then be ready to offer continuing education on a highly flexible basis from then on?

My colleague Amelia Ashe, of Richmond College of CUNY, has been trying to develop just such a program for several years, though so far without success because our university, like most, finds it hard to break out of the lockstep patterns of credits and courses and degrees. What she has been dreaming of is a true continuing education center--not just a list of three-credit courses. Some enrollees might indeed receive credit, but others not. Some learning units might indeed run for fifteen weeks, but only if their particular purposes and contents happened to fall naturally into a pattern of fifteen weekly sessions. But most would probably not fit that pattern; some might be one-day programs, some a weekend, some one week full time, some every afternoon or evening for one week (for commuters), some twice a week for four weeks, once a week for six weeks, or every fourth Saturday for a year. I realize that most universities occasionally do something along these lines, and there may even be places that have a really full-blown program of continuing education. But I suspect that for the most part the preservice complete package is the rule, and truly flexible continuing education the exception.

What I am thinking is that maybe the best time for counselors to learn to do precollege counseling is when they are high school counselors and for the first time really see the need to help youngsters plan their post high school education. How much more meaningful it would be for them at that time to enroll in a workshop or practicum in precollege counseling--a workshop or practicum to which they can bring the real problems they are

facing and from which they can bring back to their schools new ideas, techniques, and materials that can be implemented immediately. (Amelia Ashe did in fact conduct just such a workshop--it happened to be for ten consecutive Saturdays, and it was given without academic credit and without fee. The workshop was oversubscribed, was well attended, and was a delight to teach because of the highly motivated meaningful involvement of the counselors who were enrolled in it.)

Continuing education can be aimed at serving different types of purposes. For beginning counselors it can be the place to supplement and complete the basic education. For experienced counselors, it can be a place to catch up on new developments, or to learn something that may not be new but that the person never had the need to learn before.

In planning counselor education for the 70's and beyond, I hope that we will pay much more attention to this concept, will include it in our statements of standards (because one of the main values of such statements is a stimulus to ourselves and our institutions), and will try to influence the financial decision-makers at all levels to support this kind of work. But first we will need to ask ourselves: which components of our total package of counselor education are better done on a preservice basis, and which would be better taken out of the package and kept in stock for the shoppers who will later discover that this is what they need and want?

E. Manifold Roles: All OK

The Standards do not explicitly deal with the role of the counselor who is being prepared. The Standards do seem to imply that there may be different conceptions of this role, because the early sections call for consistency between the counselor education program and the philosophy of the institution. Counselor educators are advised by the Standards to relate their programs and their efforts to a continuing study of the needs of youth and of the institutions and society in which the graduating counselors will be employed. All of this clearly suggests that there is no one conception of the role of the counselor. This is the way things should be, because there are many legitimate counselor roles.

However, in practice we sometimes give our students--and practicing counselors--a hard time because they aren't doing what we think they should be doing. There are of course some things that everybody agrees counselors should not be doing--trivial things, administrative tasks that the principal or one of his assistants should be doing, excessive clerical work, etc. But those are not what I am referring to.

What I mean are the conflicting role models that are presented to counselors--all of them professional role models, all of them important, all truly part of guidance and counseling, but nevertheless in conflict with each other. For instance, some say that counselors should be doing career guidance first and foremost. No matter what we may think of the priority of this function, I don't see how one can say that this is not a legitimate guidance

and counseling function. Others say that counselors should be available mostly to work with people with problems--troubled children and youth who need a private relationship in which they can try to work through problems of a personal, social, family, or other kind. And it is hard to argue against that as a legitimate guidance and counseling function. Still others believe that counselors should spend much of their time reaching out into the school, trying to help students and faculty to function more effectively, serving as facilitators of productive interaction, as a kind of applied social psychologist. And one can't argue with that as a legitimate guidance and counseling function.

The problem arises when pressure is placed on counselors to be one of these but not the others, or to be several or all things at once. Neither kind of pressure is reasonable, in my judgment. And yet we do it all the time--and we make counselors feel guilty and angry and confused.

What does this have to do with counselor education standards for the 70's and later? I suggest that our public statements should very clearly indicate our belief that there are different kinds of roles for counselors to play, and that the role a counselor plays must depend in part on what that counselor does best and finds most satisfying, and in part on what the school needs and wants. Ideally, each counselor education institution should offer its students a choice of roles to prepare for. (This is in a way related to the earlier discussion of specialization. Now I am focusing on major role within the realm of general guidance work.) But this may not be feasible, because each role might require its own distinctive constellation of counselor education faculty, appropriate studies, and suitable supervised experiences. In a city or other area where prospective students of guidance and counseling have more than one university to choose from, it would be desirable, I think, for each university to have a different kind of emphasis, so that they may complement one another rather than compete. In areas where there is no choice of university, the problem is less readily solved.

But one of the poorer solutions anyplace is for members of the faculty to just go their separate ways, each to preach a different role model and each to work toward different goals. Students tend to become confused and end up not being well prepared for any role. Professors should certainly profess what they believe in, but this is not the best way to do it.

For me the conclusion is this: there is more than one legitimate role for a guidance counselor. We should help each counselor-in-training to find out what his or her best role is, then help each one to develop the competence to perform the selected role, and later to locate a place of work where the counselor can have an opportunity to perform that role with appreciation and satisfaction.

F. Full-Time Study

Again I find myself in disagreement with some people I respect, but I cannot help feeling that there is a very limited future for guidance and

counseling until full-time study becomes the basic mode of preparation. Perhaps I am reflecting the frustration of the urban university, where almost nobody is a full-time student, where for years almost all students have been teachers who drag themselves in after a full day of demanding work and who drag home afterwards to take care of family and social obligations. In my eyes the lucky students and professors are those who are located in areas where it is not possible to be anything but a full-time student.

I can't help feeling that part-time students as a group do not change and develop to the same extent as full-time students--especially full-time students who are members of an integrated program such as the NDEA Institutes were--a program where they invest their energies and their hopes and their total selves, an experience from which they derive a sense of professional identity that is very difficult to derive via the part-time route.

I suspect that rehabilitation counseling and college student personnel work are closer to this ideal than school counseling. Perhaps school counseling will be able finally to approach the goal of full-time study as the basic mode, if we open the doors more and more to people for whom this is a first rather than a second career choice--younger people who haven't already taken on job and family responsibilities that rule out full-time study.

Otherwise, I fear that school guidance and counseling will continue to be in the very ephemeral state in which it has been, a state in which it seems to be regarded as one of the less essential parts of a school program--one of the first to go when money is tight.

I suspect that we made a big mistake years ago when, in our typical American obsession with quantity, we decided to produce lots of counselors in a short time. Counselor education programs sprang up almost overnight, and many of them were hospitable to people who happened to spend a summer near their mountains or seashore, or who dropped in for whatever course or courses happened to be offered the evening they were free.

Recently there was an article in the Canadian Counsellor that compared the development of guidance in England and Canada. The writer concluded that the English had proceeded much more soundly by training smaller numbers of counselors only through full-time study, while the Canadians, like us, went the part-time route. The English prepare fewer counselors, but they aim for quality.

I believe we would be better off today if we had used our resources to prepare a much smaller number of counselors than we did--a fraction perhaps,--but that would be, I think, a stronger professional group, a group which knows who they are and what they are doing, a group whose professional identity would be much stronger and firmer and clearer, a group which, for example, would not drop in and out of professional associations as so many counselors have done over the years.

True, under those conditions there would be many fewer counselors, but that is the condition in many fields that have insisted on maintaining quality.

I think we need to give very serious consideration to the matter of full-time study and to see how much readiness there may be on the part of our field to commit itself to that as a goal. If full-time study were given, I think that most of the quality standards we have been trying for years to introduce would finally have a chance to be attained.

CONCLUSION

I am not questioning or criticizing the present Standards as they are, but rather asking whether we have failed to come to grips with some of the critical issues of our field. Only after we do that can we discuss the specifics of a statement of standards and the specifics of curriculum.

Increasingly people are recognizing that major change is necessary in counselor education; our students know it, their clients know it, schools and communities know it. There surely are other tough issues that we need to struggle with, besides the ones I have emphasized. No doubt I have stressed those which impinge most upon me in my own work setting. No doubt colleagues in other kinds of settings have their own priorities, and I think we should find out what they are.

If nothing else, I hope through this means to find some people who agree with me. Maybe we can put our heads together and find some way to do our thing.